

OUR VIEW

Drop-in peer centers add valuable services to battle addiction

The local area learned of some good news last week when three drop-in peer centers opened, adding another layer of services that will make a difference in the future.

The Oregon Washington Health Network drop-in centers in Hermiston, Pendleton and Milton-Freewater are designed to offer support and guidance from peers who can help people seek addiction assistance.

Amy Ashton-Williams, the net-

work's executive director, said the grand opening of the Hermiston drop-in center was monumental and we couldn't agree more.

The drop-in centers are a grassroots way to help tackle addiction. The services are free, which is another big plus. The centers can offer a low-key type of assistance to help those in need, and in a perfect world there would be far more such center than currently exists.

Addiction is one of those com-

munity challenges that needs more attention from us all. If we have not been touched by addiction challenges — either personally or with a loved one — it can be hard to relate to the impact such problems can generate. Addiction touches not just the individual but those around them and, often, impacts public safety. Police spent a huge amount of time dealing with addiction — in one form or another — so the advent of a resource such as the

peer drop-in centers is good news for everyone.

Addiction is a subject that can be easily dismissed by those who have not been touched by it. It shouldn't be dismissed. Drug and alcohol addiction costs millions in taxpayer dollars every year. If a viable method can be found — such as the drop-in centers — to help it should be embraced by all.

Ashton-Williams said in a story in this newspaper that her

organization already had helped about 50 people in the past few months. The new offices mean even more people will be able to access addiction services.

The centers are an investment in the future in a real sense. They will provide a key piece of infrastructure to help our area combat addiction — in all its forms — and hopefully, ultimately help make a real difference in our collective future.

PETERSON'S POINTS

Look to local examples to learn anti-bullying behavior

As October is Anti-bullying Month, we should honor those people for whom kindness is natural. We should 1. learn from their example, and 2. try to root out our own personality defects. We should keep from being bullies.

I write this as a person is trying to be better, because I need to be better.

My own form of bullying comes from a bad sense of humor. Too often, I say the first thing that comes to mind without further thought. It is mean, judgmental and hurtful. I do harm, and after realize the need for apology. I say sorry, but the damage has been done.

1. Certain groups around town have shown a clear example of anti-bullying.

The most recent Hermiston School Board meeting showed terrific civility. As we see national news of clashes between school boards and members of the public, note the hostility, lack of reason and uncontrolled rage. Then contrast that with what occurred at the last school board meeting.

The atmosphere of the meeting was light and relaxed, friendly even. When board members laughed, it was not from cruel jokes, but from

pleasantness. Likewise, when guests spoke, they also brought good vibes to the room.

Even when people disagreed with the board, and spoke for the need of change, everyone remained respectful.

Now, I am not saying all meetings need to be conducted with all participants singing "Kumbaya," but it is nice to see grown people interacting in a spirit of unity and mutual thoughtfulness.

The Hermiston School Board meeting was not the only occasion where people act well, far above the most egregious examples in our larger society. Probably, they should all be named, but I will only mention one more for something learned at its meeting.

In the past week, a new friend invited me to a Hermiston Kiwanis Club meeting. It was also a pleasant affair. This meeting featured Byron Smith, Hermiston city manager, who delivered a presentation on developments in town. The club welcomed Smith and Mark Morgan, assistant city manager, who was also present.

In this friendly environment, club members were able to hear about actions that affected their lives. They also got to ask questions and deliver feedback. It was downright productive.

I bring the Hermiston Kiwanis meeting up not just for another

example of civility in our community, but for something else I noticed in their meeting. It was this thing that gives us a method for maintaining decent, un-bullying behavior.

2. The way to not be bullies, as described by a Kiwanis sign, is surprisingly simple. The sign, which was on display at the front of the meeting room for all to see, was a recommendation to be thoughtful before speaking.

It listed suggestions, derived from the advice of Socrates. Before one speaks, one should ask oneself three questions. First, is one's statement true? Second, is one's statement good? Third, is one's statement useful? If the answer to all these questions is affirmative, only then does a person speak.

This triple filter test is the answer to bullying behavior. It is an enlightened way of thinking, which is already employed by our best people.

So, thank you, Hermiston School Board meeting participants, Hermiston Kiwanis Club meeting attendees and all those other people who are acting well as they build better communities. Throughout this month, when we discuss answers to bullying behavior, we should all learn from your examples.

Erick Peterson is the editor and senior reporter of the Hermiston Herald.



Erick Peterson

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Tuberculosis taught us vaccinations protect students and teachers

It would have been unthinkable in 1957, when I started teaching in Hermiston, for any person involved with school children to refuse showing they were free of tuberculosis. The certification necessary could be achieved through a Tuberculin Skin Test or a chest X-ray.

I first encountered this regulation in December 1954 when I accepted a job driving a school bus. While in college, before I could drive, I had to have a chauffeur's license and a current certificate showing the date of my last chest X-ray. They would not let me do a TST because I had close contact with a person who was infectious with TB when I was 15. Later, the care was necessary when our class went to observe teachers in the classroom and when I did my student teaching. While teaching, I had to renew my certification every three or four years. These mandates were accepted without question because we knew it involved the health of our children.

The Supreme Court in 1905 ruled that in matters of health the state has the authority to make laws to protect its citizens. This has been affirmed several times since. Smallpox vaccination was the original case, but I think we may have overdone it when we were still giving the vaccination until the 1970s. The last death in the U.S. from smallpox was in 1949.

The CDC reported the death rate for tuberculosis in 1958 was 36.7 per 100,000. By the time I retired in 1990, the rate was below 6 per 100,000. "Statista" listed the death rate in Oregon for COVID-19 Oct. 14, 2021, are to be 97 per 100,000 with Oregon ranking number 46. Mississippi was number 1 on the same date and had a death rate of 333 per 100,000. The extent of that state's management of the disease is the governor suggesting people get vaccinated. I guess their tolerance for death is a lot higher than Oregon's.

For those who are so uncaring about the health of their students that they would quit teaching because they refused to get vaccinated, I have little sympathy. When I was teaching, the health and well-being of every child was my number one priority. Now that I am older, I am also concerned that a child might bring the virus home and their grandparents might be one of the 97.

Carlisle Harrison
Hermiston

COLUMN

Reading is helpful for catching kids up in school

Children across the country and around our communities are returning or have returned to classrooms. However, parents, teachers and students have expressed significant concern. How do we make up for the past year and a half with so much loss of instruction? First, some students were not able to connect with the online learning, parents were overwhelmed and trying to help them with their school work, and then some students just disappeared not showing up at school when schools resumed, creating frustration for parents, teachers and students.

Teachers have experienced challenges over the years with multiple levels of students in the classroom. They have become more overwhelmed with students at more significant learning gaps upon returning to school. There are those students who were able to connect with and participate in online learning, as well as those with par-

ents who could adjust their schedules to participate in homeschooling. Still, some parents didn't have those opportunities, and their children faced new challenges.

We can't go back. We have to keep things moving forward. Our children are resilient, and they will bounce back quickly. But, we all have to be aware and provide additional support if we see a child struggling.

As parents and community members, one of the best things we can do to assist our schools is to engage our children. Language is key to the child's development and understanding of their surroundings. Take the time to have a child tell you what they are doing and why not just when they have done something wrong, builds pathways in their brains to increase their comprehension of what is happening around them.



Scott Smith

Reading with or to children remains one of the best learning opportunities an adult can do with children. When you read with a child or to a child, there are several key activities you can engage the child with to increase their understanding. Questions along with asking their opinion will increase their knowledge. If you can relate the activities in what you are reading to real-life experiences, it will help the child build the comprehension skills they may have missed during the last couple of years.

Consider a nonfiction book in your child's area of interest. We all enjoy a good story, but a nonfiction book might help make up for some lost classroom time. Again the learning happens during the discussion about the information.

Still, no matter how hard we try, the time has been lost because

of the pandemic, and we have to keep moving forward. Getting our children engaged can be difficult sometimes. You're ready or have time to work with them, and they start crying and arguing making a whole different challenge. If you should experience your child pushing back, know you are experiencing a learning opportunity. Our children want to have some form of control in this out-of-control time. So knowing how to deal with this will make everyone's day happier.

You might start with a question, such as, "Would you like to read a book?" Whatever activity you have in mind. We would hope to hear "Sure," but it doesn't always happen. Then, if you start to get push back, this is your child showing they want to challenge control. So give them a statement like, "We need to complete this story or do our reading today so we can do it now or when you're ready, but

we need to start in 15 minutes to complete it in time for ... Which would you prefer?" Doing this shows your child they can control something in what seems to be an out-of-control time in their world. In most cases, children will come and read because the number one thing they want is time with you. Our children want our time, whether it be positive or negative. We as adults have to make it positive, and this trick is quick and straightforward.

Looking forward is our way to help our children move past these last couple of years. Spending time and interacting with them will also help overcome the time missed in the classroom. Let the learning begin.

Scott Smith is a 40-plus year Umatilla County educator and serves on the Decoding Dyslexia Oregon board as its parent/teacher liaison.

CORRECTIONS

It is the policy of the Hermiston Herald to correct errors as soon as they are discovered. Incorrect information will be corrected on Page 2A. Errors committed on the Opinion page will be corrected on that page. Corrections also are noted in the online versions of our stories.

Please contact the editor at editor@hermistonherald.com or call (541) 278-2673 with issues about this policy or to report errors.

SUBMIT A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Letters Policy: Letters to the Editor is a forum for the Hermiston Herald readers to express themselves on local, state, national or world issues. Brevity is good, but longer letters should be kept to 250 words.

No personal attacks; challenge the opinion, not the person.

The Hermiston Herald reserves the right to edit letters for length and for content.

Letters must be original and signed by the writer or writers. Anonymous letters will not be printed. Writers should include a telephone number so they can be reached for questions. Only the letter writer's name and city of residence will be published.

OBITUARY POLICY

The Hermiston Herald publishes paid obituaries; death notices and information about services are published at no charge. Obituaries can include small photos and, for veterans, a flag symbol at no charge.

Obituaries can be submitted via the funeral home, by email to obits@hermistonherald.com or in person at the Hermiston Herald or East Oregonian offices. For more information, call 541-966-0818.